

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **JOINT-PERSONNEL & BUDGET**

DATE: **NOVEMBER 17, 2008**

Committee Members Present:

Personnel Committee:

Supervisors Thomas
Kenny
Stec
Sokol
Tessier

Budget Committee:

Supervisors Geraghty
O'Connor
Champagne
Sheehan
Merlino

Committee Member Absent:

Personnel Committee:

Supervisor Belden

Vacant: Town of Thurman

Others Present:

Fred Monroe, Chairman
Hal Payne, Commissioner of
Administrative and Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board
JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner of
Administrative & Fiscal Services
Paul Dusek, County Attorney
Supervisor Simmes
Supervisor Strainer
Supervisor Taylor
Frank O'Keefe, County Treasurer
Rick Murphy, Deputy Commissioner of
Fiscal Services
Rich Kelly, Personnel Officer
Todd Lunt, Human Resources Director
Pat Auer, Director, Public Health
Amy Clute, Administrator, Self-Insurance
William Lamy, DPW Superintendent
Shane Ross, Chief Deputy
Nicole Livingston, Deputy Clerk

Mr. Thomas called the joint meeting of the Personnel and Budget Committees to order at 9:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously to approve the previous minutes, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

The joint Personnel and Budget Committee Agenda was distributed to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Thomas apprised Item 1 on the Agenda was the request to reclassify the position of Account Clerk to Self-Insurance Assistant, which was defeated at the November 12, 2008 Personnel Committee meeting.

Mr. Sokol questioned what the ramifications were for this employee to continue working out-of-title. Mr. Thomas stated one ramification was that the employee was limited to what duties could be performed.

Amy Clute, Administrator of Self-Insurance, agreed with Mr. Thomas and added that was her concern as well. She advised that she had emailed the Committee members a copy of the justification she had prepared, as well as the job description created by

the Civil Service Department, copies of which are on file with the minutes. She further explained that the employee had been auditing medical bills to determine whether or not the treatment was appropriate, consistent with the Workers' Compensation Law, and assuring the fee was within the Workers' Compensation fee schedule, all of which was clearly beyond the duties of an Account Clerk. She added that to date this year, over \$75,000 had been saved by auditing medical bills.

Ms. Clute reminded the Committee members that this position was not funded through the County budget, it was covered by the Self-Insurance Plan and therefore had no effect on the County budget.

Mr. Geraghty questioned why the position was structured at such a low level pay grade knowing that the employee would eventually take on duties above and beyond that of the title. He asked if this position was allowed under Civil Service Law to be increased in steps, in order to avoid returning to Committee requesting an increase in salary. He also pointed out that although the salary did not directly effect the County budget, it was taxpayer dollars that covered the salary.

Ms. Clute responded that the rationale behind the original reclassification from Self-Insurance Specialist to an Account Clerk was because the employee that was hired to replace the retiring Specialist came from a different department and had no knowledge or previous experience with Workers' Compensation. She noted that at that time the Support Services Committee was well aware that eventually the position would be reclassified once the experience and knowledge had been achieved.

Messrs. Tessier and Stec entered the meeting at 9:09 a.m.

Mr. Kenny asked how many years Ms. Clute had been in the Self-Insurance Department and she replied approximately twenty years. Mr. Kenny said about eleven years ago the Insurance Department processed Property & Casualty claims through the County's carriers; however, he said, the Department no longer handled those claims. Ms. Clute replied that was correct, the claims were handled by the County Attorney's Office. Mr. Kenny stated it appeared that the Department had lost half the work it once performed yet still had the same number of employees. He added that the Insurance Department was supposed to develop a Safety Program; however, he noted, the County would be spending \$30,000 to hire a consultant to develop the plan.

Ms. Clute countered that the Department had taken on a large portion of the Property & Casualty Insurance, they were responsible for the tracking of vehicles and properties, the Workers' Compensation had become much more involved since the reforms that had taken place over the past few years and they were much more aggressive on claims. She reminded the Committee members she was not requesting new help for her Department, she was simply asking that the employee be paid for the duties she was performing. Mr. Kenny suggested that the employee return to working within the title of Account Clerk and Ms. Clute take on the additional duties.

Mr. Sokol wondered if the Department could continue to run efficiently maintaining things the way they currently were and Ms. Clute responded they could if the Civil Service Department would allow for the employee to continue working out-of-title.

Rich Kelly, Personnel Officer, illustrated that a classification was based upon what an employee did, and the Civil Service Department could only compare the employees words of what their activities were, as signed and confirmed by their Supervisor. He added that if those activities were consistent with the title of Assistant, that would be the classification. He apprised that Ms. Clute had approached this procedurally the way that the Board of Supervisors had encouraged it. Mr. Kelly noted that to have an Account Clerk serve for two years in a training process and to now be recommended to assume the position of Assistant in the Self-Insurance field boded well for the way that the proposal was originally introduced a few years ago to show the development and proficiency in a career field.

Mr. Taylor questioned if the employee was being paid for working out-of-title and Ms. Clute replied in the negative, adding the employee was being paid the Account Clerk salary. Mr. Taylor further asked what percentage of the total work performed would be considered out-of-title. Ms. Clute explained 93% of the work consisted of Workers' Compensation duties, which was more in line with the new title of Self-Insurance Assistant; 4% of the work was spent on Disability Insurance and the remaining 3% consisted of other duties, such as accounting on the Logos system.

Mr. O'Connor asked if the salary increase could be done in steps and Ms. Clute responded that was exactly what she was trying to do. She apprised that the employee that retired two years ago was at a pay level of Grade 12 and title of Self-Insurance Specialist and she hoped the current employee would reach that level in a few more years.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol to approve the reclassification as outlined above; however, the motion failed due to the lack of a second to the motion.

Mr. Thomas resumed the Agenda review, and stated Item 2 was the request to fill the vacant position of Supervising Public Health Nurse, which was defeated at the November 12, 2008 Personnel Committee meeting.

Pat Auer, Director of Public Health, distributed a comparison of proposals to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. Mrs. Auer expressed how critical this position was for the operations of the Public Health Department and noted that a specific listing of the duties of the Supervising Public Health Nurse was included in the handout. She explained the Public Health Department consisted of five Supervising Nurses and forty-four full-time Nurses, which included three Nurse Technicians, eleven part-time Nurses and eighteen per diem Nurses.

Mrs. Auer said her understanding after last weeks Committee meeting was that the members wanted the position to be taken out of the 2009 Budget, which would be a salary savings of \$61,815, including the benefit package. She proposed to delete a thirty-hour per week Educator of Health position and according to the State, it would be allowable to absorb that employee in a twenty-hour, part-time educator position that would be 100% funded by the Emergency Preparedness Grant. Mrs. Auer added that would be a savings of \$30,128. She also proposed deleting a full-time Public Health Nurse position, generating a savings of \$43,150 plus a full benefit package. She apprised that the overall savings from deleting the positions and the retiring Nurse's longevity would be \$76,978. She asked the Committee members to consider this proposal.

Mr. Stec expressed his appreciation to Mrs. Auer for re-working the proposal and finding the funds to support the request.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol and seconded by Mr. Stec to approve the request as presented.

Mr. Champagne questioned if the proposal was to lay-off a Public Health Nurse and Mrs. Auer replied she hoped not and the plan would be to promote from within.

Following discussions, Mr. Thomas called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to authorize the filling of the vacant position of Supervising Public Health Nurse, base salary of \$54,251, due to retirement. A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Thomas apprised Item 3 on the Agenda was a request to revisit adding positions to the 2009 Budget. He referred to Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, for the discussion. Mr. Payne noted there were three positions in the 2009 Budget proposal that were highlighted for review. Mr. Geraghty explained the position of a Supervising Health Nurse had been added, which was a different position than the one previously discussed, and had been approved on September 23, 2008. He noted that \$19,000 for that position was funded by the State. The other two positions, Mr. Geraghty said, were in the Department of Social Services, one being a Keyboard Specialist, base salary of \$23,390 which was 100% reimbursed by Medicaid and the other being another Keyboard Specialist in the Food Stamp Unit, which was 75% funded by the State. He added that both the Keyboard Specialist positions were approved on September 10, 2008.

Item 4, Mr. Thomas stated, concerned the Budget overview. Mr. Geraghty advised the Budget had decreased slightly since the Committee last met. Mr. Payne reported that \$250,000 in Health Insurance expenses would be removed from the Budget and \$40,000 had been re-instated for the Tobacco Education Program. He added that the 3% salary increase for Department Heads versus the tiered system was included in the Budget as well, for an increase of 3.5% over the 2008 Adopted Budget. However, he

noted, that percentage did not include the deletions presented by Mrs. Auer which would reduce the final figure even more. Chairman Monroe questioned how many retirees had signed up for the extra advantage offered through the health insurance plans. Mr. Payne replied those numbers were still being worked out, although it could be three times as many as last year.

Mr. Geraghty expounded Item 5 of the Agenda related to an occupancy tax budget adjustment in the amount of \$142,000. He said it had been suggested that \$142,000 be taken from occupancy tax revenues to pay for fringe benefits for Tourism Department employees, which was an appropriate use of occupancy tax funds, as approved by the County Attorney. Mr. Stec asked if Mr. Geraghty, as the Budget Officer, recommended doing this and Mr. Geraghty replied affirmatively. Mr. Kenny interjected that he felt the request should have been presented to the Occupancy Tax Committee first and added that he was opposed to it. Mr. Stec countered that he thought it would be appropriate because it was allowable by law to utilize 10% of occupancy tax revenues and this could reduce the amount to be raised by tax. Mr. Kenny responded that the law allowed for 10% of occupancy tax funds to be used for administrative expenses of the Treasurer's Office, which was not the intent of this request.

Discussion ensued regarding the use of occupancy tax revenues.

Mr. Champagne questioned the current percentage of the increase to the 2009 Budget, including all the discussions held so far. JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, answered 3.3% not including the aforementioned \$142,000 from the occupancy tax revenues. If that proposal was included, she said, the percentage of the overall increase to the 2009 Budget would be 2.9% over the 2008 Adopted Budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried by majority vote to appropriate \$142,000 of occupancy tax revenues to cover the cost of fringe benefits for Tourism Department employees, with Messrs. Kenny and O'Connor voting in opposition.

The next Item on the Agenda, Mr. Thomas apprised, was discussion regarding pending retirements. Todd Lunt, Human Resources Director, distributed a handout concerning pending retirements, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. Mr. Payne said he had requested Department Heads to provide input in order to assist with preparing an estimate of retirees for 2009. He noted he had received responses from ten departments, and from those responses, there was a total of ten anticipated retirements; however, he said, that prediction could change at any time.

Mr. Geraghty advised he was not in favor of factoring in anticipated retirements into the 2009 Budget. He stated that retirements should be handled on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Thomas added that at best, this would be fund balance material because it

could not really be predicted when someone would retire.

Mr. Geraghty expounded it was important for Committee members to receive and review organization charts for each department. He noted the charts reflected every employee within each department, as well as the title and duties of their positions, and provided assistance when determining what positions to fill.

Mr. Geraghty announced that Department Heads had provided great assistance to him throughout the budget process and had been extremely cooperative when it came to making cuts within their budgets.

Mr. Thomas reported the last Item on the Agenda was a request for Leadership Training conducted by Jeff Farley. Mr. Payne said the cost for the training was \$2,900 and it needed to be determined how to budget for that cost. He stated that this year the cost for the training had been paid out of the Human Resources budget. He noted the options were to either have each department budget for an employee in the program or the funds could be appropriated into the Human Resources budget for 2009 for the entire cost of \$2,900. Mr. Geraghty recommended that the \$2,900 be budgeted in the Human Resources budget and that way, Mr. Lunt could keep track of the employees that participated in the training. Mr. Payne added it was an intensive eleven week program that was proving to be beneficial. Mr. Thomas added he was currently involved in the training program and was very pleased with the sessions. Mr. Geraghty recommended that the funds be included in the 2009 Human Resources budget.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to appropriate \$2,900 in the 2009 Human Resources budget to cover the cost of the Leadership Training as outlined above.

Mr. Payne announced that the State Legislature had been called back into session and one of the proposals was to cut approximately \$225,000 for Medicaid for the remainder of 2008 and all of 2009. He said that could have a significant effect on the County budget as well.

Mr. Stec questioned if all the board members would receive the list of changes to the Tentative Budget prior to the adoption on Friday, November 21, 2008. Mr. Geraghty responded the changes would be made to the 2009 Budget by resolution which would be adopted at the meeting on Friday.

Chairman Monroe apprised, in connection with the State Legislature reconvening to make additional cuts, it proved that the County was doing the right thing in trying to preserve the existing surplus and working towards rebuilding it. Mr. Stec added it was a marvel that the County was able to get to the figures previously discussed without having to utilize the General Fund Balance.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Monroe made note that the newly elected Supreme Court Judge, Robert Muller, would need office space and the County was responsible for providing that. He said that the CNA Building was being considered, at a cost of approximately \$35,000, which was not included in the 2009 Budget. Mr. Payne advised the requirements were to provide "Class A" office space and totaled an estimated 2,000 square feet.

There being no further business to come before the Committees, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Stec, Mr. Thomas adjourned the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Livingston, Deputy Clerk